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**SPEECH BY MR NG CHEE MENG, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (SCHOOLS) AND SECOND MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT, AT THE 6TH WORLD CIVIL AVIATION CHIEF EXECUTIVES FORUM (WCACEF) 2017, ON 12 JULY 2017, AT SINGAPORE AVIATION ACADEMY**

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Dr Aliu, President of the Council of ICAO,

Distinguished Guests,

Friends in the International Civil Aviation Community,

Good morning.

**Introduction**

1. Welcome to the 6<sup>th</sup> World Civil Aviation Chief Executives Forum (WCACEF). And a very warm welcome to Singapore.

2. The Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore organises WCACEF once every two years, to provide a platform for civil aviation industry leaders from all over the world to discuss ideas, share insights and exchange views on the key opportunities and challenges facing the industry.

3. I am heartened that more than 160 aviation leaders from over 80 countries and 15 international and regional organisations are here today. This is a record turnout. And, we are privileged to have with us members from the ICAO Council. I understand almost the entire Council is here. Thank you all for taking time off your busy schedules to participate in this Forum.

## **Future of Aviation**

4. The theme for this year's WCACEF is "Advancing Aviation: Fortifying Fundamentals". And aptly so.

5. The outlook for aviation is bright, and there is great potential for growth. Over the next 20 years, Airbus and Boeing forecast that air traffic is expected to grow at a rate of more than 4 percent annually. At this rate, air traffic will double within the next 15 or so years.

## **Challenges facing Aviation**

6. The benefits from a growing aviation sector extend beyond airlines and airports. Many sectors like tourism, logistics and trade depend on an efficient and growing aviation sector to prosper.

7. To advance civil aviation and harness its growth potential for the benefit of our economies and societies, the aviation sector has to collectively identify and address the challenges facing the industry in a timely and effective manner. Let me share my thoughts on two challenges.

8. First, creating a stable and enabling regulatory environment. This is especially important in the context of the global economic and political uncertainty we are experiencing. For civil aviation to thrive, airlines need the assurance that they can continue to operate in a business environment with balanced, predictable and rational policies and regulations. Sudden and unexplained changes in policies create uncertainty for airlines, reduce the efficiency of air services, and limit long-term investment.

9. Regulators should seek to harness the benefits of competition and reduce barriers to innovation. We should liberalise air rights regimes, bilaterally and at the multilateral level, and give airlines the commercial flexibility to develop and operate new services to meet the growing demand for air travel. This will maximise connectivity, and give travellers greater choice and convenience. In this way, civil aviation can continue to facilitate the flow of people, goods and ideas.

10. Second, countering the security threats against civil aviation. Terrorism and cyber-crime have emerged as global threats. Unfortunately, the aviation sector is high profile and has become a prime target. The terrorist attacks at Istanbul Ataturk Airport and Brussels Zaventem Airport last year are grim reminders of how aviation is increasingly targeted by terrorists. Aviation is also not spared from cyber-attacks. The recent Petya ransomware attack infected airport systems and caused disruptions to flights.

11. We will have to pay much more attention to aviation security. We need to increase our capabilities to ensure safe and secure air travel for passengers, even as we facilitate aviation growth.

12. Human capital development and knowledge sharing will be critical. That is why Singapore will be extending its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ICAO on Cooperation in Leadership and Management Training. The MOU currently provides aviation safety training programmes to Directors-General of Civil Aviation. It will be extended to include aviation security training programmes.

### **ICAO's Pivotal Role in Advancing Aviation**

13. ICAO, as the United Nations (UN) specialised agency for international civil aviation, plays a pivotal role in addressing the challenges facing the aviation sector. Since 1947, ICAO has overseen the sector's extraordinary development, and helped to ensure that aviation is today the safest and fastest mode of transportation in the world.

14. For that, we need to give credit to the Council of the ICAO, to its President and to its backbone; the ICAO Secretariat. As the governing body of ICAO, the Council sets the tone and pace of the work to unify and strengthen the international aviation order. That is the strength of the multilateral UN model we all uphold. Singapore remains committed to supporting the important work of ICAO.

15. ICAO's success is only possible because it is committed to helping all its 191 Member States benefit from aviation. In this regard, ICAO's '*No Country Left Behind*' initiative has been critical to helping every country meet their goals for civil aviation and strengthening the global aviation system.

16. Every now and then, there will be disagreements between States. We must approach the challenges with a spirit of compromise and willingness to achieve win-win solutions. The remarkable result on the Global Market Based Measure to control CO2 emissions from international aviation achieved at the 39<sup>th</sup> ICAO Assembly last year is an example of this at work. As a sector, we recognised that we each have a role to play to ensure that aviation is sustainable. Although no country saw all of its demands fully met, the final solution met everyone's bottom-line.

17. To maintain confidence in the international aviation system, we also need to ensure that issues are resolved quickly, especially when it concerns aviation safety and security. We have done so in the past. For instance, after the disappearance of MH370 in 2014, the ICAO Council quickly directed the development of new global standards on aircraft tracking which have made aviation safer and more secure. After the recent terrorist attacks at airports, the ICAO Council and Secretariat directed the development of a Global Aviation Security Plan, and impressed upon member States the inseparability of aviation security and national security.

18. In finding solutions to complex international problems, a key principle to uphold is adherence to international law. Even more so for international aviation, which depends on the global compact established under the Chicago Convention for the safe, secure and sustainable development of aviation. It is therefore important for all of us to abide by the Chicago Convention and various aviation agreements that we each have signed up to. This adherence to a rules-based framework will enable us to fairly and effectively resolve disagreements that may arise.

## **Conclusion**

19. Let me conclude.

20. Civil aviation has seen tremendous transformation over the past century, and will continue to be an important growth engine of the global economy in the future. I hope I have shared some food for thought on how we can collectively address the various challenges and harness the benefits of the growth in civil aviation.

21. Over the next two days, we have lined up panel sessions helmed by eminent aviation thought leaders to discuss strategic issues related to efficiency, sustainability and safety. The aim is to stimulate constructive dialogue, engender mutual understanding, and forge collective action.

22. I wish you a productive WCACEF, and an enjoyable stay in Singapore.

23. Thank you.

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